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ABSTRACT

To determine the attitudes of University of Missouri Continuing Education Programmers toward their job roles, questionnaires were mailed to all 24 programmers (10 women and 14 men). A 100% rate of return was obtained. A summary of the 17 findings is provided. Problems elicited from the questionnaires concern: (1) the difficulty in securing resource people, primarily instructors for educational programs; (2) the lack of communication with various academic departments; (3) the additional job responsibilities of the programmers in the "traditional" Extension areas; (4) the need for additional training in program planning, identifying resources, and communications with staff and university personnel; (5) the need for sufficient secretarial help; and (6) an overlap of job responsibilities among the programmers. Recommendations are offered in each of these problem areas. A general recommendation made is that a follow-up study be conducted in a year or two to serve as a comparison with the present study. (DB)

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HOW CONTINUING EDUCATION PROGRAMMERS PERCEIVE THEIR JOB ROLES

Summary of
Unpublished Special
Problem Report
August, 1971

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HOW CONTINUING EDUCATION PROGRAMMERS PERCEIVE THEIR JOB ROLES

During the last several years, a new position has been evolving within University-wide Extension called Continuing Education Programmer. The responsibility of persons employed in this position is to work in areas of adult education in which other area Extension staff are not directly involved. The primary purpose of this study was to determine the attitudes of Continuing Education Programmers of the University of Missouri toward their job roles.

On August 15, 1970, questionnaires were mailed to all 24 Continuing Education Programmers. Ten were women and fourteen were men. Follow-up cards were sent in a few cases in order to obtain a 100% rate of return. The summary presented below is based on findings from this survey.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

1. Twelve Programmers or 50 percent have received their masters degrees. In addition, three Programmers have received their doctoral degrees.
2. Agriculture and Home Economics were major areas of undergraduate concentration, with eighteen having received baccalaureate degrees in these areas. Advanced degrees were in various fields of Education.
3. Sixteen Programmers or 67 percent held an Extension position before becoming Continuing Education Programmers.

4. The major clientele groups with whom Programmers worked most frequently were ranked as follows:

   1st. Business and Industry
   2nd. Educational Institutions
   3rd. Voluntary Organizations
   4th. Government Agencies
   5th. Professionals

5. Consulting, coordinating, speaking, planning, and teaching were the top five responses given by Programmers concerning methods and techniques most frequently used.
6. Thirteen Programmers or 54 percent had responsibilities in addition to that of a Programmer. Administration and Extension Homemakers Clubs were most frequently mentioned as being extra responsibilities.
7. The majority of Programmers, 83 percent, felt there was no unnecessary overlap of job responsibilities between their job and others on the staff. The three programmers who felt there was unnecessary overlap ranked Industrial and Community Development positions most frequently in job overlap.
8. Sixteen Programmers or 67 percent stated they carried out their part of the Extension program in coordination with the other agents. Eight Programmers or 33 percent carried out their program independently of the other agents. Home Economists, Community Development Agents, and Industrial Agents ranked highest in program coordination.
9. Eleven Programmers or 45 percent considered their position to be more of a specialist; six Programmers or 25 percent considered themselves as generalists; and seven or 30 percent were undecided.
10. Perhaps the outstanding problem of the typical Programmer was finding resource people, primarily qualified and available instructors, to teach in their educational programs.
11. Another major concern of the Programmers was the apparent lack of communications with certain academic departments on the four campuses.

12. Lack of understanding and knowledge on the part of academic staff toward Extension was considered to be a major cause of problems encountered.
13. Twenty Programmers or 84 percent did not wish to be working in another position.
14. Programmers, as a whole, perceived their positions as prestigious in comparison to the other agents. Only the area director's position was ranked higher.
15. Programmers were generally <u>not</u> satisfied with the following aspects of their job:

    a. salaries
    b. secretarial help
    c. state office leadership
    d. availability of instructors
    e. communications with applicable departments of the university
    f. being informed of programs available from all campuses

16. Programmers were generally satisfied with the following aspects of their job:

    a. working relationships with other agents
    b. freedom in program development
    c. job security
    d. opportunities for working in areas of primary interests
    e. amount of leisure or family time
    f. administrative support from area director
    g. office facilities
    h. their understanding of the role of programmer

17. Primary training needs listed by the Programmers were program planning, identifying resources, and communications with staff and campus personnel.

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From the responses given, one could generally conclude that "all is going rather well" with this relatively new position. However, definite problems and frustrations were brought out from the questionnaires and these must be dealt with directly and in the near future.

1. One of the major problems faced by the Programmer was in securing resource people, primarily qualified and available instructors to teach in their educational programs.

Recommendations:

a. Additional state staff personnel should be employed to act as a liaison between academic departments on the campuses and Programmers. Their primary responsibilities would be to assist the Programmers in obtaining resource people and in carrying out educational programs of the University.

b. Continued in-service training for Programmers concerning the resources available from the four campuses should be instituted.

2. Another major concern listed by Programmers was lack of communications with various academic departments on the four campuses. There were frequent comments that certain academic departments did not respond to their requests.

Recommendation:

The Continuing Education Programmers need a much stronger campus support base composed of state personnel with direct and primary responsibilities to the Programmers. The state personnel would be able to act as liaison between the Programmers and academic departments and at the same time build a better "Extension image" with the campus based faculty members.

3. Sixteen Programmers or 67 percent held Extension positions before assuming their present position. This may explain the reason why 54 percent of all Programmers have additional job responsibilities primarily in the "traditional" Extension areas. This would seem to be a paradox in that the purpose of this relatively new position is to meet educational needs in "non-traditional areas."

Recommendation:

Administration should relieve Continuing Education Programmers of these additional job responsibilities. The "programmer image"

cannot be fully realized until these traditional activities are out of their hands.

4. As a whole, Programmers felt a primary need for additional training in the following areas: program planning; identifying resources; and communications with staff and University personnel.

Recommendation:

In-service training conferences should be scheduled with priority given to these three areas of concentration.

5. A majority of Programmers were not satisfied with secretarial help. In many instances Programmers and other agents do not have sufficient secretarial help; therefore, this additional task is left in the hands of the agents themselves. This results in a waste of money and professional manpower.

Recommendation:

Area directors should seek ways of employing sufficient secretarial help so as to allow Programmers and other staff members full time freedom in academic and educational responsibilities. This would result not only in savings of money and efficiency, but also should keep the Programmer and other professional staff members from being bogged down with secretarial and facilitative type responsibilities.

6. A small percentage of Programmers felt there was unnecessary overlap of job responsibilities between their position and others on the staff. A much larger percentage stated they carried out their part of the program independently of the other agents.

From the responses given, it may be assumed that in several Extension Areas there is a conflict of role perception among the agents. In other areas, there is no coordination of educational programs with other Extension agents. This may or may not be a problem; however, it is assumed that coordination of talents will result in stronger and better publicized educational programs.

Recommendations:

a. Position descriptions should be developed to outline specifically the job responsibilities of each staff member in an area.
b. Staff members should discuss the areas in which job overlap is occurring and seek solutions to the problem if one exists.
c. Staff members should seek the cooperation and coordination of fellow workers in educational programs.

One general recommendation would be to have a follow-up study in a year or two as a basis of comparison with the present study.

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Source: James L. Wirz, "A Study to Determine How Continuing Education Programmers of the University of Missouri Perceive Their Job Roles," presented to the Department of Extension Education, UMC, August, 1970.